DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 175 257 FL 010 481

AUTHOR Wolfe, Susan J.
TITLE Patriarchal Paradigms for Language Change.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 27p.: Expanded version of a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association (New York, December 27-30, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cultural Factors; *Diachronic Linguistics; *Etymology; *Females; Feminism; Indo European Languages; Language Usage; Language Variation; *Semantics; Sex Role; *Sex Stereotypes; Social Change; Social History; Sociocultural Patterns; Sociolinguistics

ABSTRACT

Studies in the development of sexist language can provide insights into diachronic change in word meanings. Since semantic features are intimately related to the cultural and social matrices they represent, semantic change can be predicted on the basis of cultural constants as well as cultural changes. Prehistoric cultures can be reconstructed by studying prehistoric language, using lexicons to support archeological findings or to draw independent conclusions about cultural values. Evidence from the lexicons of Indo-European languages suggests that Indo-European culture culture may not have been as unremittingly patriarchal as some historical linguists believe. Research on sexism in language and on the sexist bias of linguists suggests that we can increase the predictive and analytical power of historical semantics if we investigate language within a feminist paradigm. For example, the tendency of terms designating women to undergo pejoration can be rendered predictable by examining the pejoration process as a function of the self-image of men who dominate society and therefore its language. Similarly, the emergence of gender-specific pronouns in English may have resulted from male attribution of an inferior state of being to women. (Author/JB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED175257

SCOPE OF INTEREST NOTICE
The ERIC Facility has assigned this document for processing to: FL CS
In our judgement, this document is also of interest to the clearinghouses noted to the right. Indexing should reflect their special points of view.

Patriarchal Paradigms for Language Change*

Susan J. Wolfe (Robbins)
Department of English
University of South Dakota
Vermillion, SD 57069

*A shorter version of this paper is to be presented at the Modern Language Association, New York City, December 27-30, 1978.

FL010481

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Susan J. Wolfe

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Historical linguistics, or diachronic linguistics, the study of differences in languages between two or more points in time, first emerged as a discipline during the nineteenth century, with the genealogical classification of the Indo-European languages. Using the comparative method, nineteenth-century linguists observed systematic correspondences among the consonants of Sanskrit, Latin, Greek, Gothic, German and other related languages, observed the similarities among their verb conjugations, compared cognate lexical items denoting core concepts in the languages, and concluded they had descended from a common ancestor. During the same century, linguistic rules governing language changes in specific languages were formulated. Historical linguists then concentrated on the phonological and inflectional systems of these languages, leaving the investigation of semantic change to philologists and lexicographers, whose business it was to study etymology, the history of individaul words. Only since 1957 have linguists begun to provide a systematic framework for syntax--transformational generative grammar--which historical linguists have sought to apply to studies in diachronic syntax.[1] Knowledge of the relationships of underlying structures and categories of the syntactic component to surface structures has made it possible to express systematic changes in the rules generating the surface structures of sentences, just as the notion of underlying phonological structures made it possible to express changes in phonological rules.

In order to deal with semantic change (changes in words, or in their denotative and connotative values) historical linguistics needs a universal framework of distinctive semantic features capable of discriminating among word meanings. The natural sets of terms constituting a semantic field could then be analyzed into the distinctive features which discriminate among the

terms; anthropological linguists have already developed distinctive feature matrices to analyze the kinship terms in various languages. Lacking a universal set of semantic features, linguists must restrict their inquiry into changes in vocabulary and word meanings to specific lexical subsets (or "domains") in languages. But historical linguists hav seldom examined changes in entire domains; rather, they have restricted their investigations to individual changes in meaning; and without examining the cultural value of the referent or reference of a term, they have frequently been at a loss to explain an alteration in the meaning of that term. Lehmann (1973: 206) has noted that pairing cross-cultural and cross-linguistic data may help to clarify specific semantic developments:

> For example, the Latin word for 'maternal uncle' avunculus is a form derived from the Latin word for 'maternal grandfather' avus. The derivation is quite clear, as is the development of the Latin avunculus to Fr. oncle; NE uncle has the same source, through borrowing from French. Although the external development of the Latin term causes no problems, no explanation could be given for a semantic development that would lead to calling an 'uncle' something like 'little grandfather.' An explanation has recently been provided from the study of the systems in language referring to kinship. The system in which the mother's brother is associated with the grandfather is known as the Omaha kinship system. In a group of speakers with an Omaha kinship system one can expect to find the same or similar terms for mother's brother and for mother's grandfather.[2]

Unfortunately, except for discussion of widespread borrowings into the lexicons of attested languages and extralinguistic events which precipitated them, few linguists have expressed the generalities underlying particular changes in the lexicon. It has been noted that the denotative and connotative values of words may shift as they undergo processes such as amelioration or pejoration, or generalization and specialization. But such changes have been ascribed to particular words, not word sets.

Studies in the development of sexist language can therefore provide insights into diachronic change in word meanings. Since semantic features (unlike phonological and syntactic features) are intimately related to the cultural and social matrices they represent, we can predict semantic change not only on the basis of cultural changes but also on the basis of cultural constants. Sexist attitudes towards women have been cultural constants for centuries. We can, in addition, reconstruct prehistoric cultures using linguistic palaeontology: the use of lexicons to support archeological findings, or to draw independent conclusions about cultural values. Evidence from the lexicons of Indo-European languages suggests that Indo-European culture may not have been as unremittingly patriarchal as some historical linguists would have us believe. In brief, research on sexism in language and on the sexist bias of linguists and grammarians suggests that we can increase the predictive and analytical power of historical semantics if we investigate language within a feminist paradigm.

Most linguists would concede that the lexicon of a language expresses the interests and assumptions of the culture which uses the language. Nonetheless, only during the past decade has extensive research into the sexist terms and usage of modern languages been conducted, and little of this research has concentrated on the historical development of the semantic features and processes governing changes in the lexicons of languages. Only in absence of sexist bias on the part of the observer will changes in the direction of sexism be noted as such; hence, systematic investigation into semantic developments tending toward sexist language will only be observed by one who is attuned to the existence of sexism in the language and the culture.

Muriel Schulz (1975: 65) has observed that terms designating women tend to undergo the process of pejoration, a semantic shift whereby words acquire

a debased or obscene reference:

> Again and again in the history of the language, one finds that a perfectly innocent term designating a girl or woman may begin with totally neutral or even positive connotations, but that it gradually acquires negative implications, at first perhaps only slightly disparaging, but after a period of time becoming abusive and ending as a sexual slur.

The mildest form of debasement, democratic leveling, generalizes a term once reserved for people of rank so that it refers to people at all levels of society. That this development is assymetrical, occurring to terms denoting women but not to those denoting men of comparable rank, is evident when Schulz compares semantic shifts in male and female titles (1975: 65-6):

> Lord, for example, is still reserved as a title for deities and certain Englishmen, but any woman may call herself a lady. Only a few are entitled to be called Baronet and only a few wish to be called Dame, since as a general term, dame is opprobrious. Although governor degenerated briefly in nineteenth century Cockney slang, the term still refers to men who "exercise a sovereign authority in a colony, territory, or state." A governess, on the other hand, is chiefly "a nursemaid," operating in a realm much diminished from that of Queen Elizabeth I, who was acknowledged to be "the supreme majesty and governess of all persons" (OED). We might conceivably, and without affront, call the Queen's Equerry a courtier, but would we dare refer to her lady-in-waiting as a courtesan? Sir and Master seem to have come down through time as titles of courtesy without taint. However, Madam, Miss, and Mistress have all derogated, becoming euphemisms respectively for "a mistress of a brothel," "a prostitute," and "a woman with whom a man habitually fornicates."

Schulz claims to have located approximately a thousand words and phrases which describe women in sexually derogatory ways; she notes that Farmer and Henley (1965) have over five hundred terms in English for prostitute, but only sixty-five for whoremonger. Schulz tactfully overlooks the fact that terms for whoremongers express more of the sexual availability of women and the economic opportunism of men than of the sexual promiscuity of men.

However inoffensive the original connotative and denotative values of terms denoting women, they undergo pejoration in a way in which corresponding

male terms do not. Nun, niece, and daughter have all served as thinly-veiled euphemisms for "prostitute" or "concubine." The term nymph once simply indicated a beautiful young woman, and broad denoted any young woman or girl. Other terms originally denoted women of slovenly appearance or women otherwise unattractive to men, but gradually acquired sexual overtones; trollop, for instance, which indicated "an unkempt woman," extended to mean "a loose woman," while slut and slattern, originally designating a person of either sex who was slovenly or otherwise negligent of his/her appearance, first specialized to refer only to women, and then further derogated to refer to "a loose woman." In the latter terms we see only two of the expressions which specialized to refer to women as they began the process of pejoration, and then underwent further degeneration to become terms of sexual abuse.

Though it would seem to the objective observer that English provides an over-abundance of terms to refer to women who relate sexually to men, neologisms appear constantly in the language as terms are specialized, pejorated, and metaphorically extended for the same use. In an article which presents a semantic field analysis of 220 terms for sexually-promiscuous women in terms of denotative semantic features (such as cost, method of payment, and duration of sexual content), Stanley (1977) offers an explanation: such terms define women only in terms of their sexual relationships with men, thereby perpetuating the notion of femal subservience and passivity while denouncing the female who submits to sexual contact. Stanley (1977: 306-7) quotes Sagarin's (1962: 122) observations on the importance of coining taboo words for the establishment and maintenance of a sense of masculinity in young males:

> The adolescent, growing in his awareness of sexuality, is constantly developing and creating the language of prohibited terminology. His vocabulary, although satisfactorily expressive, is unceasingly expanding. The abundance of neologisms imparts

> a feeling, to the youthful males who create and prepetuate them, of ribaldry, vitality, and strength of a masculine character.

Later, Sagarin (1962: 125) states that the abundance of words for breasts, is an "index. . .of the need for masculine identification with peer groups among those who display toward the breast the ambivalence of shame and want, fear and desire, guilt and lust." But many of the terms located on Stanley's (1977) semantic field hardly seem ambivalent, especially the more colorful metonymic and metaphoric terms which identify women through reference to a specific portion of their anatomies or through comparison with objects or animals. On the contrary, most are obviously dysphemistic (having negative connotations): piece of ass, cunt, craterbutt, chamberpot, meatgrinder, corn-hole, pisspallet, ragbag, ringer, spreadeagle, slopjar, tail, rumper, rawhide are representative, and considerations of space prevent a comprehensive listing. In attributing the creation of such expressions to the lively imaginations of young males, Sagarin overlooks the underlying semantic feature which motivates the neologisms; as Stanley (1977) and Schulz (1975) demonstrate, terms associated with women tend to acquire sexual connotations, and new terms which enter the lexicon tend either to have such connotations or to acquire them.

Stanley and Wolfe (1978) have indicated that English predicates which are sex-marked (that is, those whose occurrence is restricted to either male or female subjects or male or female objects) are as imbalanced as the nominal expressions denoting promiscuous individuals. Despite the impressive array of verbs and verb phrases which are sex-marked in Modern English, we noted systematic gaps in the lexicon which reflect our cultural assumptions regarding the relative significance of the male reproductive organs and male sexual activity. We noted that there were several verbs indicating removal of male sexual organs (requiring male objects)--castrate, emasculate, unman, deball--

but no corresponding terms to indicate the removal of a woman's uterus. She has a hysterectomy; in other words, she "undergoes a medical operation." Similarly, despite the seemingly endless proliferation of terms denoting coition, we found none requiring a female subject; all were neutral (e.g., to have sex, to have intercourse, to have an orgasm) or required male subjects (ejaculate, rape, plow, bang, screw, nail, shove it to her). Contrary to Partridge's contention that the 1200 English synonyms for the act of sexual intercourse "bear witness to the fertility of English and to the enthusiastic English participation in the universal fascination of the creative act," many of these terms perpetuate the notion that the human male is a violent warrior who subdues a passive--if not reluctant--woman in an act of sexual conquest.[3]

Of particular interest to the etymologist and historical linguist are two English predicates with parallel historical derivations, whose meanings have fallen together, a process which gives witness to the low esteem the culture awards to women. Emasculate, derived from the Latin e-/ex- (meaning "out," "out of," or "from") + masculus means, according to Webster's New International Dictionary:

> 1. To deprive of virile or procreative power; to castrate; geld.
> 2. To deprive of masculine vigor or spirit; to weaken by removal or alteration of its potent qualities; to soften. Specif.: a. To divest (language) of vigor and freedom, as by excision. euphemism, or weakening of sense. b. To deprive (a law) of force, as by amendment or interpretation.

while effeminate, derived from Latin ex- + femina, means:

> 1. Having marked womanlike traits of character; wanting in manly strength or aggressiveness; esp., marked by weakness, softness, and love of voluptuous ease; as, an effeminate civilization; overemotional, or overdelicate; as an effeminate disposition.
> An effeminate and unmanly foppery. Bp.Hurd.

or, as a verb:

> 2. To make womanish; to make soft; weaker.

The etymological entries in the American Heritage Dictionary gloss ex- as 'removal' under emasculate and as 'out of' under effeminate; the dual reading of the Latin prefix allows both words, apparently, to designate a man who has the qualities of a woman or who lacks the attributes of a man--states which the language and the culture evidently regard as synonymous.

The work of Schulz (1975), Stanley (1977), and Stanley and Wolfe (1978)a demonstrates that explanations of general semantic processes within the language have either been overlooked by our predecessors or incorrectly attributed to male ingenuity and expressiveness. In either case, the semantic features motivating shifts in meaning have been ignored. Another study by Stanley and Wolfe (1978)b suggests that explanations for anomalous historical changes may also founder when the cultural attitudes underlying specific semantic features are ignored.

In "Going Through the Changes: The Pronoun She in Middle English," Julia P. Stanley and I pointed out the inadequacies of existing explanations for the emergence of the [š] forms of the feminine nominative pronoun in Middle English. Whereas the Old English paradigms for the third person personal pronouns differentiated the masculine nominative singular forms from the feminine and plural nominatives solely on the basis of vocalic distinctions (the masculine form having been hē, the feminine hēo, and the plural hīe), these three forms have been further distinguished by the end of the Middle English period. Some linguists fail to discuss the development of the [š] -forms of the feminine at all,[4] while others explain its origin as a morpheme-specific palatalization process. Mossé (1952: 56), for instance, attributes the palatalization of [h] or [s] (and it is interesting to note that he is not sure which sound underwent the shift) to a displacement of accent:

> The scho type which is that of the Northern dialect and the Scots. . .is perhaps the form taken in Middle English by the Old English feminine demonstrative seo, the sio with a displacement of accent (s'io > si'o > sj'o) which would have facilitated the palatization of s to sh [s to š]. But it must be remarked that the Old English feminine pronoun heo could very well, by an analogous process (h'io > hi'o > hj'o > hj'o), arrive at the same palatization.

He does not indicate the reason for the phonological rule's having applied to a single morpheme in the language, that denoting female agency, while leaving undisturbed sounds in comparable environments in other morphemes.

Other linguists have sought explanation for the profound disturbance in English pronominal forms which occurred between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, a phenomenon which is all the more remarkable because languages tend not to alter grammatical morphemes.[5] Strang (1970: 236) and Pyles (1971: 171) arrive at the same conclusion: the homophony or near-homophony of the feminine pronoun with its corresponding masculine form--a result of vowel shifts in the language--was psychologically intolerable, the possibility of misunderstanding too great. Strang states, in fact, that the distinctions between the pronouns are "fundamental to the workings of the language." However, the statement that pronominal homophony disrupted "the workings of the language" and the statement that it was psychologically intolerable in love poetry, as do Strang and Pyles, are not equivalent: English had until the late Middle English period a system of grammatical gender, in which the term denoting "a girl," for instance, was neuter in gender. Furthermore, other languages, such as German, tolerate the homophonic and homographic sie and Sie, which serve to indicate the feminine nominative, the second person plural nominative, and the third person plural nominative. Only as grammatical gender in English gave way to natural gender--that is, as the personal pronouns became even more clearly associated with sexual distinctions--did the [š] forms emerge.

Jones (1972: 132) suggest the importance of such markings to the grammar:

> . . .it might be possible to explain the direction of these pronominal changes in terms of a general instruction to the grammar to the effect that superficial case-making forms may be deleted just so long as distinctions involving sex and animateness are not impaired. [Italics are Jones's]. The result of these changes is that, with the exception of the [+possessive, -animate] ⟨his⟩, there is now no sex-ambiguous, case-sensitive singular pronominal form of the third person. Perhaps the spellings in sh- came to be part of the grammar just to carry the above instruction to the grammar one stage further, since the he spellings for the female forms suggest the possibility of homophony with the corresponding [+agent] male form.

Such analyses suggest that we have patriarchal paradigms which determine the explanations historical linguists offer for grammatical changes, just as similar paradigms direct the changes in the grammar itself. It does not seem to have occurred to Jones that it is the men who spoke Middle English who provided "a general instruction to the grammar," nor to Strang that the possibility of misconstruing a female reference as a male reference might not constitute a threat in every culture. Yet surely the "disruption" of the nominative case of the feminine pronoun, resulting in some two dozen orthographic variants before the general adoption of the maximally-distinct [$\overset{v}{s}$]--while the masculine pronoun has retained virtually the same form for centuries--is some indication that those who controlled the shifts in the language are also those who wielded the power in the culture which spoke it. And it is surely no accident that this is the same period in which man and men replaced terms such as wer, henceforth to serve as pseudo-generics denoting not only human beings in general, but males in particular, imputing something less than humanity to the half of the human race which required special designation.

The adoption of the [$\overset{v}{s}$] forms of the feminine nominative pronoun and the explanations for it belie Lehmann's (1973: 207) contention that there is "no. . .relationship between cultural changes and syntactic or phonological

changes" and his implication that there is no relationship between cultural phenomena and the syntactic and phonological components. While it is not clear whether the new forms of heo emerged in response to increased freedom for women during the medieval period, to increased oppression of women during the same period, or to continuing oppression of women based upon male assumptions of our inferiority, it is nonetheless evident that a phonological change has occurred in response to a cultural phenomenon. No other hypothesis has been advanced by historical linguists for the "palatalization rule," so one is certainly led to believe that they have found it intellectually satisfying.

Other hypotheses have gained widespread currency among historical linguists because they lend credence to existing cultural assumptions. The study of historical linguistics gained impetus during the nineteenth century because the search for the "mother-tongue" accorded well with the nationalistic fervor of the times. The genealogical classification of languages within the Indo-European family rested upon discoveries of similarities among the verbal conjugations of these languages and of cognate lexical items in their core vocabularies--words for numerals, flora and fauna, body parts, tools, and kinship terms. The principles underlying the comparative method and its use in reconstructing the culture of a prehistoric society have been discussed by Calvert Watkins (1969: 1496-8) in his Appendix to the American Heritage Dictionary:

> A number of Indo-European languages show a similar word for the kinship term "daughter-in-law": Sanskrit snusā́, Old English snoru, Old Church Slavonic snŭ́kha (Russian snokhá), Latin nurus, Greek nuós, and Armenia nu. Albanian has nuse in the meaning "bride," a meaning shared by the Armenian form; in a patrilocal and patriarchal society, where the bride went to live in her husband's father's house, "daughter-in-law" and "bride" were equivalents.
>
> All of these forms, spoken of as cognates, provide evidence for the phonetic shape of the prehistoric Indo-European word for "daughter-in-law" that is their common ancestor. Sanskrit,

> Germanic, and Slavic agree in showing an Indo-European word that began with sn-. We know that an Indo-European s was lost before n in other words in Latin, Greek, Armenian, and Albanian, so we can confidently assume that Latin nurus, Greek nuós, Armenian nu, and Albanian nuse go back to an Indo-European *sn-. (Compare Latin nix (stem niv-), "snow," with English SNOW, preserving the s). This principle is spoken of as the regularity of sound correspondences; it is basic to the sciences of etymology and comparative linguistics.
>
> . . .the full form of the word for "daughter-in-law" in Indo-European is *snusós.
>
> It is noteworthy that no single language in the family preserves this word intact. In every language, in every tradition in the Indo-European language family, the word has been somehow altered from its original shape. It is the comparative method that permits us to explain the different forms in this variety of languages, by the reconstruction of a unitary common prototype, a common ancestor.
>
> . . .The reconstruction of vocabulary can offer a fuller, more interesting view of the culture of a prehistoric people precisely because it includes nonmaterial culture.

Certainly part of the continuing fascination of comparative historical linguistics is that it has allowed us to reconstruct the language of a culture some five thousand years old. However, as Lehmann (1973: 37) has warned in a slightly different context, it behooves us to proceed carefully when making pronouncements about an unattested language of great antiquity, since "reconstructions smell of the lamp even more than most scholarly products do and are best kept to serve their proper function as concise summaries of our current information." In reconstructing Indo-European culture on the basis of the meanings of lexical items in Indo-European languages, we must not subscribe unthinkingly to Watkins' (1969: 1498) assertion that the "reconstructed words *deiw-os and *dyeu-pəter- alone tell us more about the conceptual world of the Indo-Europeans than a roomful of graven images," without a painstaking examination of the lexicon of Proto-Indo-European and its reflexes in the daughter languages, in conjunction with available archaeological evidence. Rather, we must bear in mind that we are reconstructing the culture of a society which flourished some three to five milennia ago, many centuries

before the languages for which we have written records, and the well-known fact that lexical items undergo meaning shifts in response to cultural changes.

The existence of cognate vocabulary in a given semantic field indicates the existence of a corresponding set of notions at some point in the culture--not necessarily for its duration. Furthermore, we cannot be sure that the referents of the cognates remained unchanged for two milennia. A cursory glance at the Indo-European cognates provided by Algeo (1972: 90-3) will illustrate the point: the Sanskrit word cognate with Old English ēast is uṣas, meaning "dawn," while Lithuanina dievas, meaning "god," is cognate with Sanskrit dyaus-pitar, meaning "Sky-father." Hypothetical statements about Indo-European culture which assume an unproven fixity of cultural assumptions and semantic features based upon the meanings of more recent cognates ought therefore to be unthinkable among comparative historical linguists.

Unfortunately, such proves not to be the case. However clearly mounting archaeological evidence points to matriarchal religion among the Indo-Europeans,[6] historical linguists remain determined to prove etymologically that Indo-European religious worship was as patriarchal as the Indo-European society they have reconstructed on the basis of kinship terms. To support his contention that linguistic palaeontology has been more useful in unearthing Indo-European culture than the inferences drawn by archeologists on the basis of material remains, Watkins (1969: 1498) offers the following observations regarding cognates for "god":

> . . .Yet for the Indo-European-speaking society we can reconstruct with certainty the word for "god," *deiw-os, and the two-word name of the chief deity of the pantheon, *dyeu-pɔter- (Latin Jupiter, Greek Zeus pater, Sanskrit Dyaus pitar, and Luvian Tatis Tiwaz). The forms *dyeu- and *deiw-os are both derivatives of a root *deiw-, meaning "to shine," and appearing in the word for "day" in numerous languages (Latin diēs; but English DAY is not related). The notion of deity was therefore linked to the notion of the bright sky.

> The second element of the name of the chief god, *dyeu-pəter-, is the general Indo-European word for FATHER. But this word did not refer here to the physical sense of father as parent, but to the social sense of the adult male who is head of the household, the sense of Latin pater familiās. For the Indo-Europeans, the society of gods was conceived, in the image of their own society, as patriarchal. The reconstructed words *deiw-os and *dyeu-pəter- alone tell us more about the conceptual world of the Indo-Europeans than a roomful of graven images.

Watkins has correctly reconstructed the Proto-Indo-European form for "god," *deiw-os, on the basis of cognate words for "god" in several Indo-European languages. Nevertheless, these data do not point to a "patriarchal society of gods," as he contends. If the notion of deity is etymologically connected with the brightness of the heavens, it seems likely that Indo-European religion began as a pantheistic worship of nature, shifting only later to an anthropomorphic pantheon. He reasons that cognate terms such as Jupiter, Zeus pater, and Dyaus pitar prove that Indo-European religion had a principal deity who was male, governing the other gods in much the same manner as the Roman pater familiās ruled the members of his household. This rather ingenious interpretation is evidently necessary because existing literary texts prevent him from concluding that the early Indo-Europeans believed that a male figure had created unaided the entire universe, and subsequently ruled over every aspect of it. In fact, Zeus pater did not head the pantheon in Hellenic Greece; Gaia, a female deity who ruled the earth, married her son Uranus, who then ruled the heavens; they were overthrown by the Titans, who were in turn overthrown by Zeus. This progression may reflect actual stages in Indo-European religious worship, and they certainly seem to constitute an attempt to justify male supremacy in the culture, thereby implying that the role of the pater familiās was itself a relatively recent phenomenon.

Watkins appears to have disregarded the fact that centuries elapsed between the hypothetical origins of the Indo-Europeans and the recording of

the texts in which the cognates for Jupiter appear. Yet even the morphological structure of the Sanskrit and Greek terms suggests that they were not part of the original core vocabulary of the Indo-Europeans: both Zeus pater and Dyaus pitar are compounds, whose last element is the general Indo-European term for "father." Only in the Latin have the elements been fused. Had the chief deity been perceived as male for two thousand years, the term denoting him would not have been a compound; in fact, we might anticipate that the noun Dyaus/Zeus would not require marking at all.

Oblivious of the time-depth of Indo-European society, historical linguists have made blanket assertions about its culture, as though neither the culture nor the lexicon had undergone any change. In discussing Indo-European kinship terms, Watkins (1969: 1500) has stated that:

> They are agreed in pointing to a society that was patriarchal, patrilocal (the bride leaving her household to join that of her husband's family), and patrilineal (descent reckoned by the male line). "Father" and "head of the household" are one: *pəter-, with his spouse, the *mater-.

Lockwood (1969: 185-6), Meillet (1964: 389-92), and Lehmann (1973: 232) are in agreement with Watkins' cultural reconstructions. Lockwood notes that words of "Indo-European age" denote

> relatives of the husband (i.e. his father, mother, brother, sister, brother's wife), but the corresponding terms for the wife's relatives are indefinite and vary much from language to language. Indo-European society was thus markedly patriarchal, the wife entering the husband's family. Doubtless a reminiscence is preserved in Lat. domum dūcere 'marry' lit. 'lead home,' a term used only of the man. Compare also Ger. heimfuhren with the same sense, in (literary) use to this day.

Lehmann contends that the Greek term for the wife's father, pentherós, cognate with our word bind, indicates "an acquired relationship between the wife's family and the husband's," and supports the conclusion that the wife joined her husband's family.

Not all the data offered in the above passages are of equal caliber. The existence of cognate kinship terms across a wide variety of Indo-European languages does point to patrilocal marriage during some stage in the evolution of Indo-European culture. Latin domum dūcere, however, need not be considered a "reminiscence" of such a custom; rather, the phrase points to the widely-known fact that we cannot reconstruct an Indo-European term for "marriage," just as we cannot reconstruct etymons for "husband" and "wife." The lack of etymons denoting legal conjugality renders suspect all discussions concerning the relationships between a "wife" and her "husband's family," but historical linguists hasten to reassure us that it is the very antiquity of patriarchal institutions which accounts for these systematic gaps in the lexicon. Thus, Benveniste (1973: 193-95) concludes that "the term which we translate by 'marriage'. . .is only valid for the woman and signifies the accession of a young woman to the state of legal wifehood" because men and women are not equals in the matrimonial state:

> That is why there is, properly speaking, no Indo-European term for 'marriage.' As Aristotle observed for his own language, 'the union of man and woman has no name. . . .' In fact, the expressions encountered today are all secondary creations; this is true of Fr. mariage, German Ehe (literally 'law'), Russian brak (derived from brat'sja 'carry off'), etc. In the ancient languages the facts are far more specific, and it will be of interest to consider them in all their diversity.
>
> This diversity is not merely lexical, a testimony of independent designation in each separate language, it is also morphological, and this fact, which is less obvious, has not been noticed. We have to clarify this in order that the facts may be organized: the terms differ according to whether the man or the woman is concerned, but the important difference is that for the man the terms are verbal, and for the woman nominal.
>
> In order to say that a man 'takes a wife', Indo-European employs a form of a verbal root *wedh- 'lead', especially 'lead a woman to one's home'. This particular sense emerges from close correspondence between the majority of languages: Celtic (Welsh) dy-weddio, Slavic vedǫ, Lithuanian vedù, Av. vādayeiti, with the

Indo-Iranian derivatives vadhū- 'newly married woman',
Greek héedna 'marriage gift'.

A woman, by contrast, does not "marry"; she "is married," she is "given in matrimony" by her father.

Unlike Benveniste, I would be inclined to argue that the most important fact about Indo-European terms for marriage is that they "are all secondary creations," as are the terms for "husband" and "wife." (The latter are derived from terms denoting "men" and "women" generally, or from those indicating the master and mistress of a household.)[7] In fact, I suspect that historical linguists would tend to dismiss the work of a linguistic palaeontologist who argued with similar conviction that a matriarchal Indo-European culture might be reconstructed on the basis of a semantic field consisting only of secondary lexical creations. If there are no primary cognates denoting "marriage," the logical conclusion is that that marriage was not an ancient Indo-European institution, but was rather a later development.

In general, there has been little investigation into the significance of the Indo-European vocabulary of kinship since Delbrück (1890). Discussions of the lexicon have included cursory remarks on the general absence of terms relating to women, and attributed this to the patriarchal structure of Indo-European society. Benveniste (1973) alone has attempted to revise the traditional interpretation of certain lexical anomalies which appear in the kinship terms of Indo-European languages (notably those occurring in Latin and Greek), but he too resolves them by means of the patriarchal paradigm. According to this paradigm, Indo-European society was always patriarchal; therefore, any terminology which appears to attribute legal status to the mother is probably non-Indo-European in origin. If Indo-European terminology makes reference to other forms of descent or to other systems of kinship, it resulted from an

extension of patriarchal concepts and/or was a language-specific innovation.

"Anomalies" pervade the kinship terminology of Indo-European. An extensive discussion of them is thus clearly beyond the province of this paper, but some terms which have provoked discussion may be introduced along with the specious explanations which have been offered for their existence. While the paucity of cognate terminology indicating relatives of "the wife" fits neatly into the patriarchal paradigm, inconsistencies in the terms for "brother" and for "son" require independent explanations.

Benveniste (1973: 172-3) notes that the Greek term phrā́tēr, the correspondent of Indo-European *bhrā́ter, denotes membership in a phratry rather than consanguineous kinship. Furthermore, the other term for "brother," adelphós, denotes uterine kinship; it means literally "born of the same womb." Benveniste refutes the contention that the use of Greek phrā́tēr to denote clan membership is an innovation; he claims that Greek instead "preserves here the 'broad' meaning of Indo-European *bhrā́ter which is still reflected in certain religious institutions of the Italic world. . .the 'brother' is defined with reference to the 'father', which does not necessarily mean the 'progenitor'." According to this analysis, "brotherhood" means common descent from a mystical "father."

Benveniste would also have us believe that the terms denoting uterine kinship "overturned" the old fraternal designations when "maternal descent [became the] criterion of fraternity" in Greek. Such a sequence of events implies a culture which perceived mystical descent from a father before it was aware of the biological realities of childbirth, and which moved temporarily from a kind of patriliny to matriliny. In light of available information about extant "primitive" societies, this progression seems rather

remarkable. Moreover, there is etymological evidence that adelphós, evidently derived from delphús 'womb,' is not a Greek innovation. Lockwood (1969: 185) notes possible Sanskrit cognates and their implications:

> Applying the regular sound changes, Gk delphús can be closely compared with Skt gárbhas 'do.', the prototypes being IE *gwelbhus, *gwelbhos. Further, the Sanskrit compound sagárbhyas 'full brother' enables us to analyse Gk adelphós (Home adelpheos) correctly: it has been dissimilated from *hadelpheós. The prefix is IE sm- 'one', normal grade sem- (cf. Latin semel 'once', and p. 191). The basic sense of the compound is therefore 'belonging to one womb.' It is a formation of Indo-European antiquity, from a time when society needed a term for 'uterine brothers and sisters', i.e. not the children of parents, but the children of a specific mother.

There are also speculations among historical linguists regarding the Latin term for "son," filius, linked to an etymological family implying the notion of "sucking" (felo, fecundus; Umbrian feliuf, acc. plural, "sucklings"). Benveniste (1973: 191-2) "conjectures" that filius "has evolved from a group which we may hypothetically posit as *sunus filius; the true term was eliminated from the analytical expression." However, no speculations regarding the form of the term *sunus are to be found in the literature of Indo-European linguistics, a fact which is all the more remarkable when it is common knowledge that the Indo-European suffix of kinship is -ter or -er. Both Watkins (1969) and Benveniste (1973) comment on the prevalence of the suffix, which functions not only as a morphological marker of Indo-European kinship terms of great antiquity, but serves as a productive morpheme in new creations and remodelled expressions. Curiously enough, neither comments on the anomaly of *sunus, which, unlike terms for consanguine relatives and "in-laws," lacks the suffix. *Swesor "sister," on the other hand, is examined because it seems open to analysis as a compound: *swe, from *seu, a third person pronoun and reflexive, sometimes referring to the social group as a whole, and *sor, a feminine suffix. The American Heritage Dictionary (1976) entry for seu-[2]

reads in part:

> seu-[2]. Also se-, swe-. Pronoun of the third person and reflexive (referring back to the subject of the sentence); further appearing in various forms referring to the social group as an entity, (we our-) selves." 1. Suffixed extended form *sel-bho in Germanic *selbaz, self, in Old English self, sylf, self, same: self. 2. Suffixed form *s(w)e-bh(o)- in Germanic *sibja-, "ones own," Blood relation, relative, in Old English sibb. relative: SIB: GOSSIP. 3. Suffixed form *se-ge in Germanic *sik, self, in Old Norse sik, oneself (reflexive pronoun), whence -sk, reflexive suffix: BASK, BUSTLE. 4. Suffixed o-grade form *swo-ino- in Germanic *swainaz, "one's own (man)," attendant servant, in Old Norse sveinn, herdsman, boy: SWAIN. 5. Extended form *suwo-in Latin sui (genitive), of oneself: SUICIDE. 6. Extended lengthened grade form *sed in: a. Latin sed, se, self, oneself (accusative): FELO DE SE, PER SE: b. Latin sed, se without, apart (<"on one's own"): SECEDE, SECERN, SECLUDE, SECRET, SECURE, SEDITION, SEDUCE, SEDULOUS, SEGREGATE, SELECT, SEPARATE, SURE: c. Latin compound sobrius, not drunk (ebrius, drunk; see egw-): SOBER. 7. Possibly suffixed lengthened o-grade form *so-lo- in Latin solus, by oneself, alone: SOLE[2], SOLITARY, SOLITUDE, SOLO: DESOLATE, SOLIFIDIAN, SOLILOQUY, SOLIPSISM, SULLEN. 8. Extended root *swedh-, "that which is one's own," peculiarity, custom, in: a. Latin sodalis, companion (<"one's own," "relative"): sodality; b. suffixed form *swedh-sko- in Latin suescere, to get accustomed: CONSUETUDE, CUSTOM, DESUETUDE.

Benveniste (1973: 173-4) concludes that this data indicates that the position of the sister differs from that of the brother: she is "defined by reference to a social unit, the swe, in the bosom of the 'Grossfamilie', where the masculine members have their place." In other words, a term meaning "she who is of us" originally is but another indication of female inferiority in a patriarchal society.

None of these analyses would be particularly suspect in isolation from the others; viewed as a group, however, they reflect the biases of those working within the patriarchal paradigm. Anomalies are not explained; they are explained away. Evidence pointing to alternative forms of kinship which might devalue the role of the biological or mystical male parent is simply ignored or is interpreted as additional evidence of the antiquity of Indo-European patriarchy. Once the same data--and the explanations offered for

them--are examined outside patriarchal modes of inquiry, serious flaws in the paradigm appear. For instance, the very classification of Indo-European roots, separated into homonyms with apparently different sources, may be open to question. (The American Heritage Dictionary, following Pokorny, derives *sunus etymologically from *seu[3], a root meaning "to give birth," which is listed separately from *seu[2], the source of *swesor.)

While it would be premature to advance the hypothesis that the lexicons of Indo-European languages reveal several different stages in the development of the Indo-European culture from one which valued maternity to one which values paternity, patriliny, and patrimony, there is certainly sufficient evidence to cast doubt upon existing cultural reconstructions of Indo-European. In so doing, we might discover how entire semantic fields undergo shifts in meaning to accompany shifts in cultural values, and, in the process, how to do responsible linguistic palaeontology. At the very least, we may establish the need for ascertaining the role of observer bias in determining the outcome of linguistic research. Cultural and social biases appear to shape the nature of inquiry, even when the area of inquiry is one like historical linguistics, which might be expected to lend itself to objective investigation and analysis.

Notes

[1]1957 was of course the date of publication of Chomsky's Syntactic Structures, the germinal work for transformational syntax. While the study of generative diachronic syntax is still in its infancy, significant historical studies using a generative model have already emerged, such as Lehmann's (1974) Proto-Indo-European Syntax and Traugott's (1972) A History of English Syntax. For discussion of the relationship between diachronic syntax and generative grammar, see Traugott (1965) and King (1969). For recent applications of generative theory and methodology to diachronic syntax, see Li (1975) and Li (1977).

[2]Lévi-Strauss (1969: xxxvii) identifies a Crow-Omaha kinship system as one which raises or lowers "by one or two generations certain members of two lineages which are arranged symmetrically on either side of a third containing Ego. Indeed, many writers class Crow-Omaha nomenclatures with that of societies with so-called asymmetrical marriage, i.e., prescriptive or preferential marriage with the matrilateral cross-cousin."

[3]This observation was made by Sagarin (1962: 129), and quoted in Stanley (1977: 307). She cites Partridge in the same passage.

[4]Jespersen (1964: 212), for instance, comments on the fact that pronouns and other native grammatical forms are scarcely ever replaced by speakers, so that the borrowing of the Scandinavian forms of they, them, and their constitutes a linguistic anomaly in need of explanation. Interestingly enough he ignores the changes which occurred in the forms of the feminine pronoun during the same period.

[5]Bloomfield (1966: 410) notes that forms which occur with very high frequency in a language resist innovation, and cites as examples the personal pronouns of Modern English which "persist in spite of great irregularity." These remarks seem particularly ironic in view of the fact that English pronouns have undergone innovation--in the direction of greater irregularity. See also n. 4.

[6]An article in Human Behavior (September 1978: 50-1) discusses evidence of European goddess worship uncovered by archaeologist Marija Gimbutas during the past eleven years. In this article, Gimbutas suggests that material remains indicate that "the Old European system was at least matricentral. That is, the mother was the center of the family and the group." Gimbutas has found mother-goddess figurines dating back some eight thousand years, which predate by millennia "the Indo-European sun and male-oriented symbolism with their patriarchal social structure." She believes, however, that the Indo-European invasions were responsible for the introduction of patriarchal religions.

[7]Buck (1949: 95-7) presents the Indo-European synonyms for "husband" and "wife" along with their etymologies. The observation that the terms are secondary creations is his.

References

Algeo, John. (1972). Problems in the Origins and Development of the English Language. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. (1976). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Benveniste, Emile. (1973). Indo-European Language and Society. Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press.

Bloomfield, Leonard. (1966). Language. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Buck, Carl D. (1949). A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Chomsky, Noam. (1957). Syntactic Structures. The Hague: Mouton & Co.

Delbrück, Berthold. (1890). Indogermanische Verwandtschaftsverhältnisse. Cited in Benveniste (1973: 165).

Gimbutas, Marija. (1978). Quoted in article in Human Behavior (September 1978: 50-1).

Jespersen, Otto. (1964). Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin. New York: W. W. Norton.

Jones, Charles. (1972). An Introduction to Middle English. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

King, Robert D. (1969). Historical Linguistics and Generative Grammar. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Lehmann, Winfred P. (1973). An Introduction to Historical Linguistics. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

_____. (1974). Proto-Indo-European Syntax. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. (1969). The Elementary Structures of Kinship. Boston: Beacon Press.

Li, Charles N. (1975). Word Order and Word Order Change. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.

_____. (1977). Mechanisms of Syntactic Change. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.

Lockwood, W. B. (1969). Indo-European Philology. London: Hutchinson & Co.

Meillet, A. (1964). Introduction à l'étude comparative des langues indo-européennes. University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press.

Mossé, Fernand. (1952). A Handbook of Middle English. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.

Partridge, Eric. (1961). A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English. New York: Macmillan.

Pyles, Thomas. (1971). The Origins and Development of the English Language. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Sagarin, Edward. (1962). The Anatomy of Dirty Words. Secaucus, N.J.: Lyle Stuart.

Schulz, Muriel R. (1975). The Semantic Derogation of Woman. In Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance, eds. Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.

Stanley, Julia P. (1977). Paradigmatic Woman: The Prostitute. In Papers in Language Variation, eds. David L. Shores and Carol P. Hines. University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press.

_____ and Susan J. Wolfe (Robbins). (1978)a. Sex-Marked Predicates in English. To appear in Papers in Linguistics.

_____. (1978)b. Going Through the Changes: the Pronoun She in Middle English. To appear in Papers in Linguistics.

Strang, Barbara. (1970). A History of English. London: Methuen.

Traugott, Elizabeth C. (1965). Diachronic Syntax and Generative Grammar. Language 41.402-15. Reprinted in Modern Studies in English, ed. David Reibel and Sanford Schane. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969.

_____. (1972). A History of English Syntax. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Webster's New International Dictionary, 2nd Edition. (1934). Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co.